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President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Meeting on the global food and energy crisis

Agenda item 48 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

The President: In connection with agenda item 48, members will recall that, in a letter dated 16 July 2008, I forwarded the revised comprehensive framework for action of the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, presented by the Secretary-General.

Statement by the President

The President: The international community is confronted by an alarming and interconnected increase in food and oil prices. Those conditions have been compounded by the unpredictable effects of climate change and a depressed world economy. The potential social consequences are extremely grave.

The United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report* identifies food insecurity, together with water stress, rising sea levels, exposure to climate disasters and environmental degradation as the key transmission mechanisms through which climate change could reverse human development.

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the rise in food and oil prices could severely weaken the economies of up to 75 developing countries, so that the prospect of stagflation — slowing growth and rising inflation and unemployment — is real for many. The World Bank estimates that rising food and fuel costs could reduce the gross domestic products of 40 to 50 countries by 3 to 10 per cent, pushing at least 100 million people into poverty.

The global food and energy crisis therefore requires an immediate, coherent and coordinated response, with the United Nations system playing a central role. When the Secretary-General briefed Member States in June, he pleaded for the continued support of the General Assembly in dealing with those pressing issues.

On various occasions, Member States have underlined the need for the General Assembly to take concrete steps to tackle the food and energy crisis. Furthermore, the Economic and Social Council's 2008 Ministerial Declaration calls for urgent individual and collective action to stem the impact of the crisis and put the global economy on a more sustainable footing.

The comprehensive framework for action before us today provides a coherent and coordinated strategy for doing so. I would therefore like to commend the Secretary-General for taking the initiative and recognizing the need for prompt and coordinated global action.

Just as we have dealt with climate change at this session, we must now apply the full, continuous and high-level commitment of all Member States to the food and energy crisis. While dealing with the dramatic

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effects of these crises, we must use this opportunity to inject new life — a new deal — into the multilateral system.

Since the beginning of the year, commodity prices have surged by more than 30 per cent as a result of record food and oil costs. That growing tension between the supply of and demand for agricultural products is a result of a complex cycle of factors, such as skyrocketing energy costs, increasing demand from emerging economies, the unfolding of the credit crisis in the real economy and commodity speculation.

Climate changes, intensifying drought, floods and cyclones, and the increasing popularity of ethanol-based biofuel have taken food off the world's table. As a result of all those complex factors, for more than 2 billion people today higher food prices are a matter of daily struggle, sacrifice and survival. All economies regardless of size and strength, but particularly the least developed, have been affected. That is why it is an emergency. That is why prompt action and global coordination are necessary.

A comprehensive multilateral approach based on the framework is necessary to address the crises, minimize the negative spillovers and lay the foundations for improved supply over the medium term. The framework for action has two key objectives: first, to meet the immediate needs of vulnerable populations, and secondly, to build long-term global food security. To achieve that, the Secretary-General has called for the international community to provide $25 billion per annum to support those goals. Overall, the multilateral system — including the World Food Programme, the World Bank, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the IMF, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations — has already amassed around $2.3 billion, and the G8 countries around $10 billion, to support food aid, nutrition interventions, social protection activities and measures to increase agricultural output in affected countries.

That is still well short of what is needed annually. I would therefore like to call on donors and the multilateral system to do more, not only because development aid for agriculture has fallen from a high of 17 per cent in the 1970s to just 3 per cent today, but also because the real impact of each dollar spent on food aid is almost half of what it was last year.

The General Assembly must now provide the political commitment necessary so that the measures before us today receive widespread international support. The General Assembly should also play an active and crucial role by facilitating global partnerships on food and agriculture involving all relevant actors — national Governments, the private sector, civil society, donors and international institutions. The United Nations must facilitate and coordinate all those actors, while the General Assembly should set the overall policy direction.

We should carefully listen to those voices that are calling for more sustainable patterns of consumption and production as the pillars of a new economic model. We must now begin to take the tough initial steps so that, over the long term, we can inject new life into multilateralism and move to a new economic paradigm for the twenty-first century.

In order to do so, we must use every available process and mechanism at our disposal to address the food crisis. That includes financing for development, climate change, upcoming meetings on Africa's development needs and the Millennium Development Goals, as well as the United Nations overall reform agenda. We must also systematically address longer-term structural issues to create economic security for all.

An urgent and mandatory step at the global level is to reach an agreement to rationalize agricultural policies by ensuring a swift and successful outcome to the Doha Trade Round. As long as agriculture continues to experience more market-distorting policies than any other sector, we cannot count on sustainable global food security. It has been estimated that reducing subsidies and lifting tariffs and other trade barriers would stimulate food production and offer a route to development for 180 million small farmers in Africa.

The food crisis therefore offers a win-win opportunity for the international community to collectively agree to policies that promote trade efficiency while also boosting agricultural production and reducing the vulnerability of the poorest around the world. Spiralling oil prices in the context of a warming global climate also offer the opportunity to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by embracing new cleaner and sustainable energy, such as wind, solar and — why not? — nuclear.

Most importantly, we must have the courage to actively engage those issues and to take decisions. I would therefore support the calls made by several Member States for food security and development to be one of the main priorities of the sixty-third session. However, given the urgency of dealing with the food and energy crisis, the General Assembly should adopt a resolution calling for immediate concerted global action at this session. Unless we collectively develop a joint solution to deal with the food and energy crisis, all of our efforts to address climate change and achieve our Millennium Development Goals will be fatally undermined.

I now call on the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to review progress in addressing the global food and energy crisis. As you will recall from my previous briefings, I have established, at the request of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination, a High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis bringing together the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions and other relevant international organizations, to respond to the crisis in a coherent and coordinated way.

Even before prices started rising dramatically, nearly 10,000 children were dying from causes related to malnutrition every day. At least 800 million people were going to sleep hungry every night. That is a moral outrage.

At the same time, the effects of climate change — such as increased exposure to drought, rising temperatures, more erratic rainfall and extreme weather events — are threatening water and agricultural systems, potentially condemning millions more to face malnutrition and water shortages. And now, with energy costs soaring and the price of food having increased by more than 50 per cent in the past year alone, the problem is certain to worsen, potentially pushing an additional 100 million people into hunger and poverty.

The double jeopardy of high food and fuel prices threatens to undermine much of the progress made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. As I stated at the G8 summit in Hokkaido, the three critical challenges to our shared humanity and, in fact, to our way of life — realizing the Millennium Development Goals, addressing climate change, and responding to the global food and energy crisis — are interrelated and global in nature. They therefore require a global response through global partnerships. We cannot afford to fail or betray the hopes of those tens of millions of vulnerable. The crisis is not a short-term issue; it will require the sustained attention of Governments, donors, international and regional organizations, civil society and the private sector for years to come.

The world community is already moving in that direction. At the G8 summit, leaders of the world's richest countries made important commitments to tackling the triple challenge of climate change, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the food and energy crises. In early July, the Economic and Social Council, in its Ministerial Declaration, recognized the seriousness and complexity of the global food crisis and reiterated that its consequences require a comprehensive and coordinated response by national Governments and the international community. That action is under way.

United Nations agencies and their partners are shifting resources and mobilizing new funds to ensure that food assistance and nutritional care reach those most in need. We are supplying small farmers in developing countries with seeds, fertilizers and other inputs to grow more crops. That is a start, but with so many millions of people threatened by the crisis, all of us, including Member States, need to do much more, immediately. Those efforts need to be stepped up further and sustained over the next three to five years.

Allow me to applaud today's proposal by the European Commission for a special facility, worth more than $1.5 billion, that would provide a rapid response to the food crisis. Crucially, the money would be in addition to existing development funds and would be provided to the developing countries most in need. The funds would be disbursed in coordination with the United Nations Task Force and other international organizations.

To reach the MDG on reducing poverty and hunger, we need a global partnership for food. Governments must be at the centre, but we all — Member States, donors, United Nations entities, Bretton Woods institutions, the scientific and academic communities, businesses, non-governmental organizations and civil society — have to work together.

I believe that the global partnership should be guided in its actions by the comprehensive framework for action before us today. The framework has been developed by my High-Level Task Force and represents the agreed-upon and consolidated guidance of all its participating agencies and organizations.

From the outset, it is important to understand what the framework is and what it is not. The framework is not a one-size-fits-all blueprint for a response that will work in every situation, but rather a menu of actions that must tailored to the specific context and needs of each country and inform national Governments' food security strategies. The framework is not a fundraising vehicle and it does not provide detailed costing. Rather, it aims to catalyse country-level action by providing Governments and key partners with the main elements for formulating responses. It recognizes that any response must take into account the specific circumstances of particular countries or regions. While many actions may require external assistance, the framework's suggested policies and actions are intended above all to build countries' own capacities and resilience to future shocks.

The next steps we need to take are clear. First and immediately, we must ensure that vulnerable populations are not left without urgent help in the midst of the emergency. We should do that by scaling up food assistance and other nutrition interventions; increasing predictable financial support for food aid; reducing restrictions on donor contributions; and exempting purchases of humanitarian relief food from export restrictions and added export taxes. We may also need to establish a global reserve system for humanitarian food.

Secondly, we must act immediately to boost agricultural production this year. We should do that by providing urgently needed seeds and fertilizers for the upcoming planting cycles, especially for the world's small-scale farmers. It is high time to reverse the dramatic and deplorable downward trend in agriculture's share in official development assistance (ODA). ODA has dropped from 18 per cent 20 years ago to just around 3 per cent today. I have urged the G8 leaders and international donors to increase the portion of ODA devoted to agriculture from 3 per cent to at least 10 per cent.

Thirdly, we must improve fair trade and the free flow of markets by reducing agricultural subsidies in G8 countries. The rise in agricultural commodity prices in low-income, food-insecure countries offers an opportunity to reallocate savings to agricultural investment.

Fourthly, we must significantly increase investment in agriculture and rural development so as to make them a viable sector of the economy. We should do that by boosting public spending on agriculture and rural infrastructure.

Fifthly, we must strengthen global food commodity markets to meet the needs of all countries and people, particularly the poor, including by minimizing export restrictions and levies on food commodities to help stabilize food prices. I call again for a rapid conclusion of the next World Trade Organization Doha Development Round.

Sixthly, Member States must reassess subsidies and tariff protections for biofuel production. It is true that biofuels will need to remain a part of the equation in our fight against climate change, but we also need to establish an international consensus and agreed policy guidelines on ways to balance the development of biofuels with food production priorities, ensuring complementarity.

As stated earlier, the financial implications related to the crisis will require substantial political and financial commitments — from national Governments and donors first and foremost, but also from the private sector, civil society and the international system. To achieve the goals of the comprehensive framework for action, estimates suggest that between $25 and $40 billion annually may be needed. Whatever the exact sums, that is the order of magnitude required.

We must reverse years of underinvestment in agriculture and change the policies that have magnified the challenges. I urge members of the Assembly to immediately and substantially scale up public spending to respond effectively to the pressing needs of the world's hungry people.

The promises are there; now is the time to fulfil them — jointly. The cost of inaction would be unacceptably high. Over 100 million people could slide into hunger. Insecurity and political instability in the most affected countries could grow, increasing not only the immeasurable human costs, but also the inevitable expenses of addressing conflict. Migration would

increase further. Global inflation would worsen; economic growth could stagnate. Trade opportunities between regions would be lost. Some of the important gains towards realizing the MDGs would be squandered. Worse, by 2030, world food demand will have risen by 50 per cent, and by 2050 the world's population will have increased by a third. If we do not seek lasting solutions now, more children will die each day, more families will go to bed hungry. The threats left to the next generation will be even greater.

Addressing the global food and fuel crisis swiftly and responsibly, with the necessary sense of urgency and lasting commitment, will be one of the generational challenges that impact our collective future. Let us all live up to that responsibility.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement. I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Angel Edmundo Orellana Mercado, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Honduras.

Mr. Orellana Mercado (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first of all to commend you, Mr. President, and the Secretary-General on your excellent work in your respective posts. Allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to address this Assembly, on behalf of the countries of the Central American Integration System (SICA).

I am here to appeal to the conscience of the world concerning the negative impact of the high prices of fuel, denying several million people in our region access to the most basic products for human consumption. We are being victimized by the inequities in international markets, and this global crisis obliges the most vulnerable population groups in our countries to struggle simply to survive and to do battle every day in order to find sufficient food.

In my recent statement at the High-level session of the Economic and Social Council, as current Chair of SICA, I urged, in fulfilment of the mandate of the System and together with the Federative Republic of Brazil, that a special session of the General Assembly be convened on an emergency basis to find solutions to those problems.

The exorbitant prices of food have now turned basic foodstuffs into luxury and inaccessible goods, and some are even being used to produce biofuels, thus adding to a crisis of unforeseeable magnitude and effect.

The crisis demands immediate responses. We cannot consign it to oblivion and indifference to the neediest in our societies. It is therefore essential that the General Assembly should play a more active and dynamic role in formulating short- and medium-term strategies that will provide viable solutions.

We greatly appreciate the initiative of the Secretary-General to establish the High-Level Task Force that has presented proposals for action in combating the world food crisis. We also applaud the progress achieved in various forums that are today tackling the problems associated with food security, climate change and bioenergy.

Moreover, the countries of SICA, despite our limited resources, are continuing to strive to combat hunger and poverty. We are exchanging experiences that will allow us to develop and execute a regional policy in the social, environmental and energy sectors, which are seriously threatened by the current world crisis.

At the same time, this is a great opportunity for us to reaffirm the content of the statement of the summit held on 7 May in Managua, Nicaragua, which addressed the questions of sovereignty and food security and took an inclusive approach that will enable us to protect our environment and, at the same time, preserve the traditions of production and consumption that are inherent to our populations.

We cannot ignore the fact that speculative behaviour on the stock market is shunting the whole world towards a catastrophe and stripping millions of people around the world of their dignity. We should note the recent statement of the Group of Eight to the effect that the record prices of oil and food are a serious challenge to the stability of world growth. At the same time, the Group called for countries that have food stocks to release them to those countries in greatest need.

We in Central America, along with other regions and countries, have been able to work together to agree on policies to address the problems of climate change and food security. At the same time, we are fully aware of the fact that we need the support of other countries or groups of countries that are better endowed than we are. When we say that we need the support of others, we are referring to specific situations that, in the ideal vision of a fair and equitable world, would be easily achieved goals.

Just by way of example, I would note that, if trade barriers did not exist, our exportable production would come to the market in more competitive circumstances and generate more income for our productive sectors; if production subsidies did not increasingly distort agricultural trade, then our economies, which are sustained by the commodities sector, would probably be strengthened and enjoy greater opportunities for job creation; and if migration were not regarded as a crime and migrants were treated not as international offenders but as human beings, then very probably development, progress and harmony among nations would make it possible to close the gulf between the wealthiest and the poorest countries.

Those examples may be part of an unattainable aspiration, but our region will never renounce its dreams of a fair world in which there are opportunities for everyone and in which solidarity is the basic rule governing relations among all members of the international community.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Carlos Morales Troncoso, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Morales Troncoso (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his leadership in this Organization's endeavours to assess the crisis created by the unstoppable rise in oil prices and to formulate a plan of action to address its consequences.

All global crises land here, and the crisis created by the rise in oil and basic food prices is among the worst that our peoples have faced in the past 80 years. This therefore is the appropriate forum in which to address it and to find its solution.

The development of all economies has relied on fossil fuels, and the anomaly of a market where prices change every day is becoming a widespread threat to economic growth and political stability. The fact that one of the main results of the energy crisis is a shortage of basic foodstuffs makes that challenge doubly traumatic.

Vast numbers of people who survive thanks to the emergency assistance of the World Food Programme of the United Nations are unexpectedly faced with the horrible prospect of starving to death. Ever larger numbers of people in our countries are already preparing themselves for the need to feed themselves.

The scale of the global food crisis, as reflected in the recent report of the High-Level Task Force chaired by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reveals the dramatic nature of the difficulties involved. With 854 million people malnourished and another 100 million that may be driven into poverty and hunger, the crisis already has the magnitude of a world emergency.

Crippled economies, billions of people without access to sufficient nutrition, political and social tensions — that is an explosive combination for our countries and for the world. The situation collectively affects most countries and nations.

Such difficulties cannot be resolved in a lasting fashion by domestic measures. Their causes are out of our control, and some are linked to speculative processes that cannot be regulated by our Governments.

Thus, the situation calls for a collective solution and an equal measure of cooperation and international solidarity commensurate, at the very least, with the scale of the problems. If we take into account the fact that the growing phenomenon of globalization has made us increasingly interdependent, it will not be long before we witness a situation in which all of us, in one form or another, will be harmed. Some will lack money; some will lack food; others will lack oil. Economies may collapse; political tensions may be heightened. Mass illegal migration will become unstoppable. Democratic governance will become precarious or will disappear. The world may become unlivable.

We are not here to play for time, to indulge in the useless exercise of casting blame, or to turn a deaf ear or a blind eye. We are faced with a genuine emergency situation. Our country, the Dominican Republic, is part of a group of States Members of this Organization that are net oil importers with an annual per capita income of $6,000 or less, for which the increases in the price of crude are already a crushing financial burden.

Our President, Leonel Fernández Reyna, assessing the economic impact of the increases in the price of oil over the past year on those economies, stated that those increases represent some $42 billion over the past year alone. He accordingly proposed the

idea that a similar sum, representing a very small percentage of the additional income that petroleum-exporting countries received in the same period, should be contributed to the establishment of a global oil solidarity fund that could very well be administered by agencies of the United Nations system.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela took a pioneering step when, three years ago, it signed the generous PetroCaribe agreement, which created a mechanism to provide financial protection to a group of countries in Central America and the Caribbean from the negative impact that the rise in the price of oil was having on their economies. That is a tremendous model and should be emulated.

Here, we should like to restate the proposal made by President Fernández of the Dominican Republic, to the effect that nations with an annual per capita income of $6,000 or less represent a single block and should present a petition for solidarity to the oil-exporting countries. If the $42 billion that have been extracted from our economies over the past year solely to pay for the rises in the price of oil during that time were returned in the form of concessional inputs, soft loans repayable over the long term and direct investment, growth and stability would return. The bulk of those resources could be invested in providing incentives for food production, the development of more productive, light-resistant enhanced seed stocks, the diversification of available energy sources and, above all, the development of renewable energy projects.

The struggle that we are calling for today is not one of power or domination. It is a struggle for justice and for the rights of our peoples to a decent life lived in peace and freedom.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Marisol Argueta de Barillas, Minister for Foreign Affairs of El Salvador.

Ms. Argueta de Barillas (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to commend you, Sir, for convening this meeting of the General Assembly to discuss an issue of great interest to our countries. My delegation echoes the views and ideas put forward by my colleague from the Republic of Honduras on behalf of the Central American Integration System, as well as the statement to be made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

A few days ago, the Secretary-General, speaking in Japan at the G8 summit, stated that the world is facing three simultaneous crises — a food crisis, a climate crisis and a development crisis. He added that those crises are profoundly interlinked and that they need to be addressed in a comprehensive way.

El Salvador takes the view that, in the case of the food and development crises, the exorbitant and rising prices of oil play a great role. The President of the Republic of El Salvador, in previous statements to the General Assembly, strongly appealed for attention to be paid to the negative economic and social consequences inherent in the constant rises in the price of hydrocarbon fuels that we are now experiencing and that could also threaten the very governability of our nations.

The rise in oil prices are generating macro- and microeconomic imbalances, drastically affecting productivity and trade in all areas and especially in the agricultural sector, in particular in the most vulnerable developing countries. Compounding those crisis factors is the negative impact of climate change and the urgent need to discuss questions of biodiversity, including the need to seek alternative, environmentally friendly energy sources.

In that regard, we trust that the negotiating process begun in Bali will conclude successfully in Copenhagen in 2009. Our basic endeavours should be aimed at achieving a global agreement on the further reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, while at the same time achieving substantive agreements on mitigation, adaptation, technological transfer and financing for the developing countries.

The situation compels us to seek a coordinated global response in multilateral forums. That is why we welcome the comprehensive framework for action, introduced by the Secretary-General in his statement this morning, which will serve as an integrated and coherent response by the United Nations system. We believe that this road map will help to supplement national efforts designed to tackle those problems, which, with their cascade effect, are seriously jeopardizing the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly the eradication of extreme poverty, hunger and child malnutrition and the strengthening of governance.

In that context, we call respectfully but urgently on the oil-producing countries to adopt policies that are

robust, predictable and in keeping with current realities so as to avoid a deepening of the crisis. In addition, we urge them to consider including in existing cooperation instruments not only favourable financing arrangements, but also preferential pricing, for developing countries. We also call on markets linked to oil and food to act responsibly in order to eradicate speculative practices in investments in the fuel and staple-grain futures markets.

Furthermore, drastic measures must be taken with regard to agricultural subsidies in developed countries. That would encourage and reactivate agricultural production in developing countries, which would have positive effects on the importation of such products by developed countries. That in turn would simultaneously help to break the deadlock in the current trade negotiations within the framework of the World Trade Organization, strengthening the possibilities of success for the Doha Development Round.

It should be pointed out that in El Salvador, we are making great efforts to protect vulnerable groups, particularly children and the poorest families in rural areas, through social programmes to reduce extreme poverty, hunger and child malnutrition and to attain other objectives set in the Millennium Development Goals. To that end, the Government is also working with the private sector and civil society organizations to address the various challenges arising from the global food and energy crisis. In that regard, the multidisciplinary commission established by the President of the Republic will present its report to the nation on 29 July.

However, we are aware that national efforts are insufficient. That is why, in the regional sphere, we are also planning and promoting joint initiatives, such as the action plan of the Central American Livestock Council, to increase the production of staple grains and ensure the supply of cereals in our region.

At the multilateral level, international cooperation plays a decisive role in supplementing national efforts to achieve sustainable development. We believe that such cooperation should be combined with other means of support for development, including debt cancellation to promote investment in the social, health, educational and environmental areas.

North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation should be strengthened and focused in order to create alternatives in a combination of efforts and political will that will enable us to meet the most urgent needs of our peoples. In that context, we thank the countries members of the Group of Eight for the commitments undertaken at their recent meeting in Japan. We also support the initiative to create a global agriculture and food partnership.

Finally, El Salvador believes that we have the time to achieve a comprehensive response. The challenge of ensuring food, energy and environmental security represents an opportunity to unite our resolve, our efforts, our resources and our initiative in fulfilling our historical international responsibility to overcome these challenges for the well-being of all our peoples.

Mr. Blake (Antigua and Barbuda): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China in this plenary meeting of the General Assembly on the global food and energy crisis.

The Group wishes to compliment you, Mr. President, on the initiative to organize this meeting. We thank you for inviting the Secretary-General to brief the General Assembly on the revised version of the comprehensive framework for action developed by his High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis. The Group of 77 and China is on record as requiring that, while we must be in crisis mode, opportunities be found for United Nations Member States to be continuously updated and kept involved in the process. In the final analysis, any recommendation aimed at meaningfully addressing the global food crisis must be accepted and implemented by national Governments, individually or as a group, and by local populations.

The Group is pleased to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing, for the document and for earlier briefings on the global food crisis and the initiatives of the United Nations to respond.

Given the limited time available for this statement, and the fact that the comprehensive framework for action is intended for early action in light of soaring food prices and, in some cases, limited availability over the past year — on top of the long-standing deep structural crisis in the agricultural and food sectors in developing countries during the past 20 to 25 years — the Group of 77 and China has decided to concentrate in this statement on the framework.

The Group of 77 and China is very conscious of the fact that it has had very little time to study a complex document addressing a most complex set of issues and intended to guide action in a large number of States at different levels of development and with different specificities in their agriculture and food sectors. Furthermore, delegations have not had an opportunity to consult their capitals on the proposed framework. The Group therefore reserves the right to return to the framework with more detailed comments, either in writing or orally, if there is an early opportunity to do so.

The Group of 77 and China is pleased to note that there has been a recognition of, among other things, the following.

First, prior to the onset of the recent phase in the escalation of global food prices, some 854 million people — mainly in developing countries — were undernourished, and 4.8 billion human beings suffer from hunger today. They live in a food crisis in a world of plenty.

Secondly, many poor small-scale farmers have been prevented by a lack of inputs, investment and facilities for marketing from taking advantage of high prices or, indeed, withstanding global competition in their local markets.

Thirdly, increased productivity must be accompanied by investment in local and regional market development and adjustment and, we would add, the elimination of global trade-distorting practices.

Finally, there is need for urgent and simultaneous attention to meeting the immediate food needs of vulnerable populations, to building resilience and to contributing to global food and nutrition security.

The Group of 77 and China is struck by the fact that while the framework document correctly recognizes that the financial implications of the crisis will be considerable, the High-Level Task Force, in paragraph 13 of the executive summary of the comprehensive framework for action, simply recognizes developed countries' intention to increase their official development assistance (ODA) to 0.7 per cent of gross national income and urges donor countries to double ODA for food assistance. That is an invitation to reallocate existing ODA. At the same time, the High-Level Task Force, in the same paragraph, "calls on developing countries to allocate additional budgetary resources for social protection systems and to increase the share of agriculture in their public expenditure", this at a time when national budgets, especially of net food importing and energy importing developing countries, are under very significant strain.

The High-Level Task Force has also avoided a detailed costing of the financial implications on the grounds that the comprehensive framework for action "is not a funding document or an investment programme" (Executive summary, para. 11). The Group of 77 and China is of the view that the comprehensive framework for action should be a living document which can and should be expanded over time to incorporate actions which will make it more meaningful and more responsive to the actual needs of the developing countries. This should be very possible since the Task Force will remain in existence for some time. It must also give priority to the interests of the poorest and neediest groups. Therefore, such a framework should be more local in scale as well as much more sustainable in social, environmental and economic terms.

The Group of 77 and China is also struck by the fact that, given the importance of technology and research and development to increasing agricultural food production and productivity in a situation of high energy prices, climate change, and given the need to minimize adverse environmental impacts, the issue of access to technology and transfer found no mention in the comprehensive framework. Further, it is unclear whether the trade and tax policies which are to be adjusted to improve access to food and nutrition support and increase food availability include international trade policies such as trade-distorting subsidies. A clear mention should have been made to subsidies and trade-distorting practices in the developed world as a major deterrent to agricultural development in the developing world and, consequently, a cause of the current food crisis.

The Group of 77 and China maintains that the comprehensive framework for action must, at this stage, remain a living framework and a living process to allow for governmental and wider societal input, acceptance and approval. In this regard, and accepting the need to proceed to action, the Group of 77 and China considers that there should be a third urgent and simultaneous objective. That objective would be to ensure, secure and strengthen buy-in and ownership at

the community, national and regional levels. Activities towards that objective, such as consultations with the international community here at the United Nations, with regions, subregions and national Governments and with relevant stakeholders would and should be pursued urgently and simultaneously with the actions on the other two objectives. This would permit action, involvement and transparency.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the stabilization and association process and potential candidates Albania and Montenegro, and the Republic of Moldova and Armenia align themselves with this statement.

A little over a month ago in Rome, the international community met under the aegis of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to seek solutions for the food crisis and make progress towards international food security. The wish to foster improved international agricultural governance to better address the crisis was at the root of the organization of the conference and its adoption of the Rome Declaration on World Food Security. That wish also motivated the proposal for an international partnership, taken up by the Group of Eight (G8), which includes: a political component, with the strengthening of international coordination between all relevant actors; a scientific component, with the creation of an independent international group of scientists; and a financial component, with the scaling up of financing in the fight against food insecurity.

Against this backdrop, we welcome the initiative undertaken by the Secretary-General to create a High-Level Task Force, chaired by Mr. John Holmes, which was mandated to define a comprehensive framework for action. Based on an analysis of comparative advantages of each stakeholder institution, this framework for action provides a particularly relevant action programme. It also offers a pertinent analysis of the current food crisis and presents a series of ambitious and constructive goals and actions. Now, we must together define the future role and functioning of the High-Level Task Force, add clarification regarding the establishment of the world partnership.

The European Union recognizes the need mentioned in the comprehensive framework for action for a coordinated approach at the national and regional levels among all partners, which must be carried out based on the needs and priorities of developing countries. As rightly underscored in the comprehensive framework for action, that partnership must comply with the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which will be updated in September in Accra.

The European Union recognizes that the emergency response to the most worrying humanitarian situations must also fit into long-term development thinking. Food aid must not be given to the detriment of the local economic fabric, and it is necessary to buy locally or regionally whenever possible, which may additionally curtail the impact of the volatility of international food prices. Consequently, the European Union intends to promote untied food aid provided in financial form. In this respect, the European Union believes that consideration should continue to be given to the revision of the London Convention on Food Aid. In addition, the European Union recalls the primary responsibility of States, which must in particular ensure humanitarian access for the most severely affected populations.

Specifically, the European Union provides significant humanitarian and food aid to a large number of the world's worst-hit regions, and firmly intends to work to offer sustainable solutions to this crisis by providing emergency aid and social protection, by setting up a fund to support farming in developing countries and by increasing aid for agricultural production in order to reduce the effects of price increases.

The allocation of an additional €1 billion — $1.5 billion — is now under way. As indicated by the Secretary-General, those funds will be used within the framework for cooperation established by the United Nations. They are aimed in particular at assisting African farmers.

Regarding its joint agricultural policy, the reform implemented by the European Union has further focused on the market and many supply management measures have been abolished. The European Union recently intervened to lower prices in global markets by selling its relief stocks and by cultivating fallow land. Those measures are now beginning to bear fruit.

At the same time, the European Union is trying to create an international trade environment that supports

small producers in developing countries. It has set itself the goal of reaching an ambitious, balanced and comprehensive agreement at the Doha Round that could help remove imbalances in world agricultural markets. It also wants to promote effective reform in the Food and Agriculture Organization, as it considers that the expected synergies of the three Rome-based agencies should allow them to play an essential role in providing aid to countries as they combat the food crisis.

The European Union recalls that it is also at the forefront of the fight against climate change, the effects of which threaten to worsen the food crisis in a large number of countries that are increasingly affected by drought and the scarcity of water, as well as in countries that experience recurrent flooding.

The European Union is very conscious of the fact that rising energy prices are also directly affecting agricultural prices by raising the price of inputs and transportation costs, which will have a significant impact on the cost of food aid. Biofuel policies may also affect the production and prices of agricultural products for food, and it will be necessary to ensure the sustainability of biofuel policies by setting sustainability criteria for the production of first-generation biofuels and by encouraging the development of second-generation biofuels made from by-products.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate here that the European Union pledges to work ambitiously and constructively with all its bilateral and multilateral partners to lessen the negative impacts of the food crisis and to make the most of opportunities identified by the High-Level Task Force.

Mr. Botora (Ethiopia): I would first like, on behalf of the African Group, to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting and the Secretary-General for his statement updating us on current developments with regard to the global food and energy crisis and on the activities undertaken by the United Nations to effectively tackle the problem since his last briefing to the Assembly on 18 June 2008. We appreciate the Secretary-General's leadership role, in particular the continued attention he has accorded to the crisis through the mobilization of the resources and political action needed for an effective response by the international community.

The African Group would like to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The revised version of the comprehensive framework for action prepared by the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis is concrete testimony to the continued and unrelenting efforts of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions and other relevant international organizations, to urgently respond to the global food crisis in a coherent and coordinated manner. The African Group, however, has not yet carefully and thoroughly examined the document, nor have delegations had the time to consult their capitals on the proposed framework. The Group therefore shares the general views of the Group of 77 and China and looks forward to providing its opinions and comments in detail at future meetings of the Assembly.

We are seeing with each passing day that the food and energy crisis continues to escalate, especially putting the lives of poor and vulnerable groups at greater risk. The crisis has worsened the situation of millions of small-scale farmers, already precarious due to poor and failed harvests brought about by erratic weather conditions, and has made millions of people unable to afford to feed their families. Moreover, the fact that the agricultural sector has not been given priority leaves small-scale farmers on their own without modern technical advice on farming, with inadequate infrastructure such as roads and storehouses, and lacking access to markets.

Africa, within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, recognized that problem five years ago and worked out a feasible strategy called the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme to address agricultural challenges in a coordinated and effective fashion. It is obvious that those drawbacks in the agricultural sector, along with the adverse effects of climate change and the surge in energy prices, have compounded the difficulties of developing countries, especially African countries, in surmounting their growing development challenges.

Africa, despite its positive economic growth in recent years, remains the most impoverished continent in the world. Its mounting development challenges have continued to hinder its efforts to achieve rapid

economic growth and sustainable development. The current global economic turmoil has exacerbated the already difficult and complex situation even further. Global food prices have significantly contributed to a hike in local food prices, causing serious macroeconomic volatility. The region imports almost all of the fertilizer and pesticides it uses, and because their prices have doubled over the past year, there is growing concern about the negative impact of those prices on the patterns and sustainability of the food production required in the coming planting season.

In our continent, where the majority of the population still earns a living from subsistence farming, the root of the problem lies in decades of neglect of agriculture. Although the food crisis has many causes, we believe that the lack of adequate and long-term investment in the agricultural sector is the major factor that has plunged many African countries into severe economic deprivation. In that regard, we welcome the emphasis accorded to long-term investment in agriculture by the High-Level Task Force and the package of support to be provided to small-scale farmers.

That issue is a major concern for Africa. It is precisely for that underlying reason that African leaders in the recently concluded African Union summit, held in Sharm el-Sheikh in the Arab Republic of Egypt, adopted a declaration entitled "Response to the challenges of high food prices and agricultural development". The declaration reflects Africa's concerns about the adverse impact of the current crisis, caused by high food prices, on African countries, particularly on the poor and vulnerable segments of the population, and recognizes the fact that the crisis will divert meagre national resources from development activities in order to meet urgent food imports. The declaration has clearly indicated the strategy to be pursued in the short, medium and long terms and stakeholders both in the continent and abroad to be involved in the search for an early and effective response to the crisis.

The declaration also calls, among other things, for a global partnership that deals with the causes and repercussions of the current food crisis and for the immediate launching of an international high-level dialogue between food exporters and importers from developed and developing countries. In that regard, the African Group wishes to reiterate the summit's call on the international community to continue to support the objective of the declaration and to implement it fully to effectively address the crisis.

We wish, in that connection, to note with appreciation that the G8 summit has continued to place emphasis on Africa and to assist its development efforts. We also welcome the G8 commitment of $10 billion to support food aid and measures to increase agricultural input. The intention of the G8 to launch a new global partnership on agriculture by the time of the upcoming General Assembly session in September is also highly commendable.

Notwithstanding all efforts made thus far, we believe that much still remains to be done. The world food and energy crisis needs the undivided attention and action of the United Nations and the international community. The successful implementation of the internationally agreed development goals and the Millennium Development Goals is also closely interlinked with efforts to address the crisis. It is thus clear that a concerted effort by the international community to translate commitment and pledges into action in order to realize all development goals, including working together for the successful outcome of development goals and climate change negotiation, is a key and critical element of our response strategy.

Mr. Gregoire (Dominica): I have the honour to speak for the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) at the United Nations. We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

CARICOM commends you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting to discuss the global food and energy crisis. We thank the Secretary-General for his briefing on the revised comprehensive framework for action, following closely on the heels of the recent Food and Agriculture Organization High-Level Conference on World Food Security, held in Rome last month, where world leaders underlined the need for the entire international community to join forces to tackle one of the most pressing challenges of our time.

The global food crisis has the potential to significantly affect the development of developing countries, in particular least developed countries and middle-income countries. The impact of the crisis is multiplied given that it is happening at a time when the international community is grappling with the negative impacts of climate change, increasing turbulence in

global trade and financial markets, and an unfolding global economic recession.

Rising energy costs and food prices not only undermine the stability of the global economic system, but also threaten the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and in particular MDG 1 on the eradication of poverty and hunger. Given that the MDGs are intricately linked and mutually reinforcing, the adverse impact on the achievement of the other MDGs is unquestionable. The crisis, which is multidimensional in nature, has the potential therefore to negatively impact economic growth, social progress and even political security.

The dramatic increase in food prices has become a major concern for the net food-importing and largely indebted countries of the Caribbean Community, prompting responses at the national and regional levels. The region has experienced a significant increase in food price inflation, with price increases most notable on basic goods, which are usually purchased by the most vulnerable groups in society. That has sparked protests in one of our own sister countries in the region.

At the regional level, Governments have agreed to remove the common external tariff on a number of items to alleviate the impact of the rising cost of food on the people of the region. In addition, heads of Government are contemplating an initiative aimed at creating an enabling economic and business environment at the regional level for agribusiness competitiveness and sustainable agriculture and rural development.

In response to soaring energy costs, CARICOM is committed to taking decisive action to promote greater energy conservation and efficiency and to supporting the increased use of renewable energy as an alternative source of energy. The generous contribution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela — known as PetroCaribe — to CARICOM and Central America, under the visionary initiative of President Hugo Chávez must be emulated by the other oil-producing nations.

Those complex threats are all global in nature and lie beyond the control of the small vulnerable economies of the Caribbean. The constraints that we face in effectively responding to those crises underline the challenge posed to promoting sustainable development in small island developing States and the need to ensure that policy responses at the international level take into account the special and unique circumstances of the smallest and most vulnerable members of the international community and focus on building resilience in those countries.

We therefore call on the international community to take urgent and collective action to address the food crisis, including its structural and systemic causes. Such action should seek to increase global food production and investment in agriculture, address agricultural subsidies, reduce the negative impacts of speculative activity, transform the global trade regime, ensure greater sustainability in the production of biofuels, and ensure that all financial pledges and commitments made to developing countries are delivered in a timely manner.

We note the findings and recommendations of the comprehensive framework for action of the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis. Given the volume and complexity of the document, CARICOM is still reviewing the document and looks forward to further opportunities in the near future to submit our views, in keeping with our firm commitment to effectively addressing the crisis.

Given the scale of the emergency, CARICOM supports the call by some Member States to make the food crisis a major focus of the sixty-third session.

Mr. Tupouniua (Tonga): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Pacific small island developing States, comprising Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my own country, the Kingdom of Tonga.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting on the global food and energy crisis. We also thank you for inviting the Secretary-General to brief the General Assembly on the revised version of the framework for action developed by the High-Level Task Force. It is important for all Member States to be actively involved in the final analysis and to make recommendations to address the current global food and energy crisis. We commend the Secretary-General for providing a clear focus on solving the food crisis we currently face.

We would like to elaborate on specific areas he highlighted that are of relevance to the Pacific small

island developing States, as follows: addressing structural changes that impede agricultural development, ensuring long-term investments in smallholder farming, reinforcing social safety nets in the most vulnerable countries, developing new financial mechanisms to enhance rural infrastructure needs, eliminating trade and taxation policies that distort the market, supporting research and technology in food production and encouraging adaptation measures.

Addressing structural changes in our agricultural development and the long-term investment in smallholder farming is crucial to our region. Over 90 per cent of the population in our region relies on agriculture and fisheries as a main source of livelihood.

Food production is therefore a major concern for our region. With the soaring prices of basic food commodities, we can no longer rely on traditional methods of conservation and ways of securing food sources. It is thus of great importance for our region to work with our donor and development partners to reinforce the social safety net to ensure that our people have access to basic food commodities.

The fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicated that at lower latitudes, especially in seasonally dry and tropical regions, agricultural productivity is projected to decrease for small local temperature increases of one to two degrees. The Pacific small island developing States are therefore particularly vulnerable as the frequency of floods is likely to increase, and that has put an enormous strain and increased pressure on our coastal settlements and rural infrastructure.

Therefore, it is of great importance to our region to see new developments in financial mechanisms to enhance rural infrastructure needs. The impact of climate change on our rural infrastructure would increase the need for financing for adaptation purposes as well.

Natural disasters disrupt food production, reduce the quantity of locally available produce and damage infrastructure such as roads and storage facilities, which results in problems in accessing sufficient quantities of both local and externally sourced food. Most Pacific small island developing States are showing worrying rates of dependency on imported foods. Basic staples, such as rice and wheat for flour, are key substitutes in traditional diets. The situation is critical in terms of food security, given the volatility of international commodity prices. Therefore, it is a priority of our region to see an increase in support for research in technology in the area of food production and to encourage adaptation measures.

It is also our hope that the world can work together to eliminate trade and taxation policies that distort the market. Without an equitable trade and taxation system, smallhold farmers from our region will not be able to compete in the global market.

The Pacific small island developing States are most vulnerable to a food and energy security crisis. In fact, the Republic of the Marshall Islands has recently declared a national state of emergency due to an imminent threat to its energy security. Unless urgent international action is taken, the Marshall Islands will be without energy after its current supplies are exhausted in early September. Despite a rapid escalation in consumer fees, the Marshall Islands faces an unmet gap between revenues and energy costs that is equal to 20 per cent of its national budget. In addition, energy prices have placed food staples out of reach for much of the Marshall Islands population and have impacted the transport of basic lifeline services to its remote outer island areas. The national crisis is a severe example of the extreme economic vulnerability to global energy price shocks facing our Pacific region.

The energy crisis is also of serious concern to our region. Both the energy and food crises are direct results of unsustainable economic and agricultural practices. Our leaders believe there remains a need for continued high-level support to address our energy requirements as well as efforts to secure equitable and affordable energy. In the Pacific Islands Forum communiqué, our leaders outlined key strategies for maintaining energy security, the emphasis of which is on technology transfer and partnership building with our development partners to secure affordable sources of energy and to develop coping mechanisms to address energy shortages.

The Pacific energy ministers' meeting provided a great impetus in the region to focus on finding solutions to the energy crisis. The leaders commissioned work focusing on regional bulk fuel procurement for the consideration of the Forum. The proposal also outlines specific mitigation and adaptation strategies in situations of energy crisis, such

as effective rationing of energy and raising public awareness of energy efficiency.

However, much like our situation with the food security crisis, securing affordable energy and finding alternate sources of energy are challenging tasks for our region. We need the support of United Nations agencies, donor and development partners, the private sector, civil society and communities. We have received effective and timely assistance from regional organizations, donors and international agencies that have helped our region to increase our capacity in food production. Let me take this opportunity to thank our donor countries and extend our wishes to continue to work with them.

One of the development projects we hope to emulate is the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) initiative launched in 2002. The FAO Plan of Action on Sustainable Agriculture in small island developing States encourages our region to move towards sustainable agricultural practices in order to create an enabling environment for agricultural intensification and diversification.

We understand that the key to the success of the High-Level Task Force will rely heavily on close partnership with Member States at the national level, civil society and the private sector. Our leaders are keen to working closely with the Task Force, and we have studied the elements of the comprehensive framework of action.

We commend the Task Force for the clear focus of the framework of action. The focus on emergency and food assistance, nutrition intervention and the establishment of safety nets is particularly relevant to our region. The expansion of food assistance in the form of food aid, voucher and cash transfer is also relevant to our communities. The focus on delivering nutritious food to high-risk groups and on school-feeding and mother-infant programmes will ensure that families from remote communities and outer islands have access to basic food and nutrition.

We also want to take this opportunity to emphasize the importance of encouraging sustainability for our farmers. It will benefit our local communities that the High-Level Task Force purchases local food supplies with food aid. That will encourage self-sufficiency and provide additional sources of income for our small-scale farmers.

We would like encourage the High-Level Task Force to discourage the practice of earmarking contributions. We understand that that may result in cutbacks in humanitarian projects in vulnerable countries in regions such as ours. We hope the High-Level Task Force and donor countries will identify the specific needs and vulnerabilities of countries when determining the level of assistance and contribution to be provided.

We thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to speak on this subject today. We look forward to working closely with the High-Level Task Force in taking immediate and effective actions to address the current food and energy security crises.

Ms. Banks (New Zealand): It is my pleasure to speak on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand (the CANZ countries). For time efficiency, I shall deliver a shortened version of our circulated statement.

We are facing an unprecedented challenge. The global food crisis endangers the world's poorest and most vulnerable. It threatens to reverse gains made towards the Millennium Development Goals of reducing poverty and hunger.

The CANZ countries are doing their best ready to assist those most affected. Ensuring a coordinated analysis and response to the current food price situation is a priority for the CANZ countries. While there is some debate about the relative importance of different drivers, the general consensus is that most of the drivers are medium- to long-term ones. Food prices are likely to remain higher and more volatile than in recent decades.

The CANZ countries welcome the strong resolve on this issue shown by the leaders of the Group of Eight at their summit in Japan. We urge countries to follow their declarations with concerted action to address the underlying structural causes of the crisis and to improve the efficiency and productivity of the agricultural sector and markets in developing countries.

In particular, we stress the benefits for all countries, developed and developing alike, of contributing to a positive conclusion of the Doha Round. It is critical that there be a breakthrough on negotiating modalities at next week's meeting of trade ministers in Geneva. A successful outcome to the Doha Round would remove major barriers and distortions to global agricultural and food trade and improve global

food trade flows. It would open up new opportunities for agricultural and food production and exports by developing countries and make an important contribution to improving global food security.

The CANZ countries appreciate and strongly support the work of the Secretary-General's High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis. The comprehensive framework of action is important and valuable because it represents a consensus view of most of the key international organizations. We are pleased with the overall approach of the framework, its response priorities in the immediate and medium terms, and its emphasis on the longer-term building of resilience.

The CANZ countries will continue to be part of the global framework to address rising food and fuel costs. The CANZ countries have already taken steps towards helping to address food insecurity through significant contributions of around $300 million, including to the World Food Programme's extraordinary appeal, and through the untying of food aid, with a special emphasis on procurement in developing countries.

The CANZ countries welcome the opportunity to work with other countries to ensure that biofuels production does not have negative impacts on the environment, promotes renewable energy use, provides economic opportunities and enables diversified agriculture.

Now that we have the comprehensive framework for action in its final form, we need to turn our attention to implementation. We agree that the implementation of the recommendations of the framework needs to use existing mechanisms. Over the coming months, the CANZ countries will be examining the final framework to consider how we can contribute further. We see the need for a comprehensive approach, including scaled-up support in agriculture and rural development and exploration of the role of social protection mechanisms. We stress that it is important for all countries to adopt appropriate domestic policy responses, including avoiding food export restrictions and untargeted food subsidies. We call on Member States to remove restrictions on the export of food for humanitarian purposes.

There is a challenge ahead to ensure that effective collaboration at the global level continues during the implementation of the comprehensive framework for action. We suggest that the Secretary-General may wish to consider a coordination approach modelled on the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds, which emphasized communication, liaison and reporting on international responses. We are especially concerned with seeing such effective collaboration happen in least developed countries and small island developing States, which are particularly vulnerable.

The CANZ countries see a very strong need for the agencies involved in agriculture and rural development in least developed countries and small island developing States to increase their level of coordination and common programming and to consider how the recommendations of the United Nations Task Force can best be applied in each region. For example, an initial meeting of donors and regional technical agencies took place in Sydney this month to discuss possible regional coordination measures in the Pacific.

The challenges of increased fuel and food prices, combined with those of climate change, indeed make it all the more important that the increased resources directed to these crises be used to maximum effect. That will require us all to commit to strong local and regional partnerships, improved coordination, local ownership and better mutual accountability if we are to get results.

Ms. Jahan (Bangladesh): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the least developed countries. We also align ourselves with the statement of the Group of 77 and China.

The group would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this event and for your opening statement. We would also like to commend the Secretary-General on his leadership role in addressing the global food crisis and for making available to us the revised version of the comprehensive framework for action developed by his High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis.

A multitude of factors explains the current food crisis. They include a sharp increase in consumption, lower productivity, unfavourable weather conditions, export restrictions, commodity market speculation, the increased use of crops for biofuels, high energy costs and the persistent asymmetry and distortions in international agricultural trade.

For oil-importing least developed countries, higher energy prices, together with the existing food crisis, have a further substantial negative impact on their already weakened economies. That leads in the short run to a significant load on the balance of payments and in the long term to a bigger loss in the gross domestic product and growth. High energy prices are also responsible for high food prices in terms of their linkage to irrigation, fertilizer and transportation.

The least developed countries will need substantive international support in terms of compensating for the excessive burden on their balance of payments. Access to modern, new and renewable sources of environmentally sound energy, energy technologies and technical know-how at affordable cost is important to the least developed countries in addressing effectively the twin challenges of growing food and energy prices.

In today's debate, the group of least developed countries will focus on the High-Level Task Force's report on the comprehensive framework for action. We are still in the process of examining the document. At this stage, however, the group would like to make the following preliminary comments.

First, the comprehensive framework for action has suggested a set menu of actions to assist communities and countries in need. The recommendations are comprehensive in terms of what needs to be done. Many of the recommendations are already in operation or in national strategies in a number of countries. The critical challenge before us is how countries that are already hugely resource-constrained can implement the recommendations.

We had expected concrete recommendations in that respect. The framework states in its executive summary that "it is not an investment programme and, therefore, it does not provide for a detailed costing". The framework estimates, however, that global incremental financing requirements for food assistance, social protection, agricultural development, budget and balance-of-payments support would have to be between $25 and $40 billion per annum to maintain progress towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 1 alone. This year, so far only $2.9 billion have been raised. The framework advises countries to mobilize additional resources to pay for food imports, but it has not spelled out how to mobilize the resources. It has not stressed the need for the development partners to enhance official development assistance.

The framework must match the necessary resource requirements, particularly for the least developed countries — those hit hardest by the crisis. The least developed countries are now net importers of food products. In 2006, the trade deficit of the least developed countries in food products stood at $6.7 billion. Quoting the forecasts of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the framework states that the world will spend $1,035 billion on food imports in 2008, which is $215 billion more than in 2007. That will severely strain the budgets of low-income food-deficit countries, mainly the least developed countries, which will see their import bills soar by more than 40 per cent this year. The Rome Declaration called upon all donors and the United Nations system to increase their assistance to developing countries, in particular the least developed countries. However, the particular concerns of the least developed countries have not been addressed in the document.

The role of ODA in stimulating and sustaining agriculture and food production cannot be overstated. In recent years, ODA to developing countries for agriculture has been drastically falling from both bilateral and multilateral sources. Aid for agricultural research remains woefully inadequate in most developing and least developed countries. The framework notes that agriculture's share of ODA dropped from a high of 18 per cent in 1979 to 3.4 per cent in 2006. Additionality and predictability are crucial in aid flows into the productive sectors, including agriculture. In addition, foreign direct investment in agricultural production has been neglected. According to a recent report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, only less than 3 per cent of global foreign direct investment was made in the agriculture and food industries in 2005.

Multilateral trade rules have an important role in influencing food security. Some developed countries are providing subsidies and other market-distorting measures. Some food-exporting countries are imposing export taxes, quotas or bans on food exports under article XI of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994. Such actions, however, have aggravated the food crisis. That needs to be addressed. The framework only encourages alternatives to export

restrictions. It is clear that trade reform is an important element of the medium- to long-term policies to address high prices. The Doha Round must lead to reduced tariffs and diminished levels of domestic support in developed countries in order to ensure greater and fairer competition in trade in food and agricultural products. Developing countries need to have an effective special product provision and a special agricultural safeguard mechanism in place.

South-South cooperation, including through triangular cooperation, can provide an important catalyst for addressing the food and energy crisis at the bilateral, regional and international levels. Such cooperation can include better trade financing, early warning systems on food shortages and possible sources of food supplies, the regional marketing and trading of food between food-surplus and food-deficit neighbouring countries, and the exchange of best practices, technologies and technical experts on agricultural production. That needs to be addressed carefully, and we hope that the framework document will take it into account.

The framework anticipates that food prices will ease gradually in 2008 and that they are likely to remain high for a longer period. That is merely a projection. Owing to high volatility in agricultural production and the agricultural market, the crisis could even recur with greater intensity. The framework does not recommend any concrete standing mechanism against the potential future onset of such a crisis at a high or even higher intensity.

With regard to possible action, the framework suggests that coordinated arrangements at the regional or global level, such as real or virtual strategic stocks arrangements, could provide countries with greater confidence that their urgent needs could be met rapidly in the event of future food crises. In our view, that purpose would be better served by establishing a global food bank and an international food fund, as proposed earlier by the least developed countries. That could reduce the volatility of food prices in the world market and provide hedging against shortfalls and price shocks in a sustainable manner.

In conclusion, let me recall that it was underscored in the 1996 World Food Summit Plan of Action that food security can be ensured

> "when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life".

More than a decade later, we are still grappling with the issue. More than ever before, given the current challenges of the global food and energy crises, we need to articulate urgent, decisive and collective action to address those challenges.

Mr. Rachkov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Today's meeting of the General Assembly represents an important logical continuation of a number of events sponsored in recent months by the international community to jointly formulate measures to address the global food and energy crisis. The Assembly is continuing the work carried out at the meetings of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development held in Ghana, the special session of the Economic and Social Council held in New York, the summit of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) held in Rome and the meeting of the Group of Eight held on the island of Hokkaido in Japan.

We believe that the United Nations and the developed countries must be the driving forces in combating the global crisis. In that regard, we consider important the Secretary-General's initiative to establish a High-Level Task Force to formulate urgent measures in response to the food crisis caused by a sharp rise in the prices of food products. The primary share of the responsibility for adopting such measures lies with developed countries.

Food shortages threaten the existence of humankind, and energy shortages threaten the development of society. The emergence and exacerbation of those problems in the twenty-first century demonstrate that humankind must consider a change in attitudes regarding lifestyles, nature, the interests of other countries and consumption policies. All indicators show this to be a systemic crisis that has so far affected only certain regions of the globe. However, given the lack of appropriate actions to counter it, the crisis could become universal, striking a crushing blow against sustainable development and jeopardizing social and political security throughout the world.

Belarus is not threatened by a food crisis. Our country's production of agricultural food products continues to rise and our domestic consumption of food is fully provided for. At the same time, Belarus cannot

stand idly by and witness the problems and difficulties of other countries and regions. We will never be able to understand those who are impassive distant observers of crises, waiting calmly to see when and how they will be resolved. We reiterate our appeal to the Governments of donor countries and to the private sector to increase their support for the aid programmes for developing countries carried out through the FAO and the World Food Programme, and to cease all activities that are helping to prolong the food crisis. In particular, they should eliminate export subsidies and other barriers to trade in agricultural products and eliminate speculative transactions on the food market.

We must also be more selective in choosing areas for the development of alternative sources of energy, taking into account both national interests and the interests of the international community as a whole. We believe that new technologies will enable us to jointly achieve the broadest possible range of options for the development not only of sustainable biofuels that do not negatively affect the food market, but also of totally new renewable sources of energy whose use will not result in the destruction of our planet's viability.

The energy crisis is caused by many factors, ranging from the artificial creation of tensions in regions where energy resources are obtained to a plethora of barriers to the implementation of new technologies for clean and sustainable energy.

Unfortunately, the desire for excessive profits continues to remain the primary reason for the lack of stability in the energy market. In the spirit of constructive dialogue, we do not wish to dwell on those aspects in our statement. Rather, we wish to put forward several ideas regarding an extremely important factor that could make a decisive contribution to resolving the energy crisis, namely, energy efficient technology transfers.

The successful introduction of modern energy technologies is a prerequisite for achieving virtually all the Millennium Development Goals, from the elimination of poverty to the provision of universal education and a solution to the problem of climate change. We are confident that since those technologies are fulfilling an important global function in which all countries are interested, they should be considered as belonging to all humankind.

Here, we would propose the convening of a discussion at the General Assembly special thematic debates this autumn of the question of creating mechanisms to use those technologies on a global scale without violating intellectual property rights and taking into account the interests of all States.

In drawing up measures to address the global food and energy crises, in addition to the mandatory satisfaction of the needs and requirements of low-income countries, there is also a need to take into account the interests of middle-income countries. From 1978 to 2003, only one low-income country was moved to the middle-income category, while some 25 States moved from the middle-income to the low-income category. In that connection, there is a need to step up assistance by the United Nations and the World Bank to middle-income countries to help them reform their economies and, in particular, the energy sector.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to thank you for convening this very timely and most important meeting on the global food and energy crisis and to commend the Secretary-General for keeping us informed of the efforts of the Secretariat in addressing that crucial issue in a timely manner.

I would also like to associate my remarks with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Our consideration of the current global food crisis should start by admitting that our international early warning system was not functioning properly, despite all our hindsight, analysis and evaluation. The fact remains that we were caught off guard in our anticipation of and preparation to deal with such an essential and vital issue.

Egypt strongly believes that there is an urgent need for a global partnership to deal with the causes and repercussions of the current food and energy crisis in order to realize the interests of developing and developed countries alike — a global partnership that would surpass the narrow scope of national policies, orientation and interests to deal with the issue of food security in a more comprehensive development context.

As the comprehensive framework for action concludes, it is true that the global food crisis poses a threat to global food and nutrition security and creates

a host of humanitarian, human rights, socio-economic, environmental, development, political and security-related challenges. However, it should not be forgotten that the centrepiece of addressing the root causes of the problem effectively should be sustainable development in its entirety, based on its three pillars — economic, social and environmental. Egypt agrees with the conclusion that the crisis stems from cumulative effects, poses a continuing challenge and requires an urgent comprehensive, coherent and coordinated response.

The crisis also underscores the validity of turning agriculture into a vibrant economic sector and of rectifying previously promoted policies and trends that adversely affected that essential sector, both from within and from outside. The adoption of a cash-crops policy at the expense of food security and the enhancement of other sectors in the economy at the expense of the agriculture sector were the result of globalization and of the increased move towards industrialization. That trend deserves a closer look if we are to reinstate the balance lost.

The methodology adopted by the revised comprehensive framework for action, based on a dual-track approach, is valid and sound, focusing on two sets of actions and time frames: urgent immediate needs and building resilience in the longer term. However, both sets of actions will remain a mere academic exercise if not coupled with a decisive political will that has been, and still is unfortunately lacking.

The framework concludes that global incremental financing requirements for food assistance, social protection, agricultural development, budget and balance of payments support are estimated at between $25 billion and $40 billion per annum to maintain progress towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1. Although the framework stresses that it is not a funding document or an investment programme, the way to meet such a huge financial burden is still without a clear road map. It will require greater commitment and political will from our partners.

In the same vein, the Secretary-General's High-Level Task Force also appealed, among other things, for more flexibility and predictability in the funding of food assistance and safety nets. That validates what developing countries have always advocated — the need for quality and predictability of funding, a call often met with unwarranted negative reactions from developed countries.

We would also like to highlight the recommendation of the Task Force that increased allocations of resources should be additional to current funding levels, and not resources diverted from other critical sectors necessary to achieve the MDGs, such as education and health.

The reality is that the crisis requires international dialogue based on common interests and mutual interdependence with a view to establishing an international code of conduct that addresses the current expansion in the production of biofuels as an alternative source to traditional energy and sets standards for the responsible use of agricultural crops.

The link between issues pertaining to the global food crisis and the energy crisis and the lack of progress required to achieve the MDGs in many developing countries highlights the importance of addressing those complex issues in an integrated manner so as to be able to strike the proper balance between all those diversified interests. The developing countries need to be able to achieve economic growth and sustainable development while contributing to dealing with mounting global challenges, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

We also emphasize the importance of actions at all levels — national, regional and international — aimed at addressing the food and energy crises. I would like further to underscore here the declaration adopted by the African Union summit held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, from 30 June to 1 July 2008, entitled "Responding to the challenges of high food prices and agriculture development". The declaration is a clear demonstration of the importance that Africa attaches to addressing the negative implications of the crisis on the African continent as a whole and the readiness of its countries to shoulder their responsibilities in the context of international efforts aiming at achieving that continent's development objectives.

We also note the outcome of the Group of Eight summit held in Hokkaido Toyako, Japan, which covers a wide range of short-, medium- and long-term responses, as well as agreed action on global food security, including ensuring the compatibility of policies for the sustainable production and use of

biofuels with food security. While these actions are aimed at assisting those suffering from food insecurity and hunger, we stress the importance of their honest implementation.

Above all, we stress the importance of reversing the overall decline of aid and investment in the agricultural sector, and we stress the commitment to significantly increase support for developing countries' initiatives in that field, including work towards doubling the production of key food staples in certain African countries within 5 to 10 years. We emphasize the importance of continued consultations on that issue between the Secretariat and Member States in order to give the necessary guidance and support to those proposed sets of actions. Intergovernmental follow-up and coordination with the Task Force through the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council are crucial prerequisites for the success and effectiveness of those efforts.

In conclusion, I would also like to draw participants' attention to the letter dated 19 June 2008 addressed by the Permanent Representatives of Chile, Egypt and Indonesia to the President-elect of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. The letter suggests that the Assembly consider the issue of food security and development as the central theme of the high-level segment and general debate of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, without prejudice to other matters on the international agenda. We trust that the general membership will support that proposal to allow our leaders to take part in shaping the international response in the General Assembly to the crisis. We express our readiness to consider any further action by the General Assembly on that issue during the remainder of the sixty-second session and under the capable leadership of President Kerim.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I thank you, first of all, for having taken the initiative of convening this special meeting on the global food crisis.

My delegation supports the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The global food crisis is of concern to us in many ways. No country is spared the effects of the crisis, and its possible spread may lead to a chain reaction of destabilization. The crisis is of concern to us because it is contributing to increasing the number of the poorest people and the malnourished. The current difficulties reflect the extreme vulnerability of many fragile areas, which are insufficiently prepared to cope with the harshness and dysfunction of global markets.

Algeria, a net importer of agricultural products, is concerned by the food crisis, as are a significant number of developing countries, that are subject to the fluctuations of the rates on world markets. The food crisis has been exacerbated by speculation in the commodities markets and reflects the inherent flaws of the global economy and, as a result, requires structural solutions.

The food crisis is the result of both internal and external factors, linked primarily to the mechanisms and regulations governing the markets for agricultural products. Contrary to certain theories, it is not energy prices that are the direct cause of the drastic rise in the price of agricultural products, although we recognize that production and transportation costs are to a certain extent affected by those of energy. In fact, in real terms, these increases in basic food commodity prices have far exceeded those of energy over the past six years.

Among the causes of the crisis, we note first the drop in agricultural production in developing countries as a result of agricultural policies followed in accordance with the harsh doctrine of comparative advantages. Policies based on the doctrines of the World Trade Organization and the international financial institutions have paradoxically had a considerable impact on food crops and local agriculture, which have either been abandoned or focused on speculative crops.

The global food crisis clearly shows the implications resulting from the dysfunctions in the international financial system and the means of regulating basic food product markets.

It is our hope that the coordinated efforts of the United Nations system and the international financial and trade institutions will be able to contribute to resolving the crisis, which requires appropriate short-, medium- and long-term responses. The United Nations High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis is planning to lay the bases for a strategic framework for global short-, and long-term action to address the effects of the crisis worldwide. Algeria firmly supports that step.

The immediate priority is of a humanitarian nature, which involves providing food for those populations in immediate need by stepping up food assistance to the most disadvantaged countries. At the same time, long-term solutions must be sought, in particular through the improvement of productivity. A resolution to the crisis also requires action aimed at agricultural production development by stepping up production and encouraging investment in the countries affected by the crisis.

In particular, we underscore the urgent need to implement projects and programmes designed to cope with the threats posed by the global food crisis to the food security of developing countries. Poor countries must be able to feed themselves through the restoration of sustainable agriculture as the driving force for development so as to exploit the enormous potential represented by small farmers.

National efforts to avert the effects of the crisis should be supported through short- and long-term action at the international level. It is high time to take real action to enshrine the right to food as one of the pillars of human rights that we must progressively realize in the context of food security.

In conclusion, it is the duty of the Assembly to follow and assess the implementation of the measures taken and commitments made by the major players in order to determine their actual impact on resolving the crisis and to correct their course if necessary.

Mr. Davide (Philippines): In this hour of incomparable and incomprehensible crisis, one might be tempted to lament with Hamlet in asking his to-be-or-not-to-be question:

> "Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
> The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
> Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
> And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;
> No more".

But we should not do so, for global survival with peace, progress and prosperity must be the destiny of this generation and succeeding ones. Therefore, we have to confront and overcome the crisis.

The Philippines wishes to commend you, Mr. President, for the swiftness with which you took your decision to convene this plenary meeting to confront and discuss the global food and energy crisis. Bringing the General Assembly together at the earliest possible hour underscores the critical urgency of this issue and provides strong authority and a strong mandate to the appeal that the nations of the world need to act now and to do so in a united, cooperative and coherent manner.

The Philippines also congratulates and commends the Secretary-General and the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis for finalizing, within the shortest possible time, the comprehensive framework for action that is before us today. The unparalleled speed with which that comprehensive document was drawn up is incontrovertible proof of the selfless dedication to duty of the Secretary-General and the High-Level Task Force and of the capacity of the United Nations to respond quickly and effectively to situations or problems that require immediate attention and resolution by the Organization, lest it become historically irrelevant.

The Philippines fully endorses the position taken by the Group of 77 and China, as expounded by the Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda. However, we wish to underscore a number of points.

The comprehensive framework for action is the result of a much longer process of thorough deliberation and discussion. The need for it was brought about by a confluence, if not a conspiracy, of factors and events that has led to the rapid rise in global food prices. The negative implications of that rise in food prices — coupled with other serious challenges on the energy and environmental fronts — for the global development agenda have forced United Nations Member States to seek authoritative guidance, such as that provided in the form of the comprehensive framework for action. Thus, the framework may provide the answer to the crisis under consideration.

The various discussions on this issue that have taken place at the United Nations in New York have reflected an understanding that the problems generated are interlinked and multidimensional. Thus, recognizing the comprehensive framework for action means that each country must take a look at its provisions and apply or adapt them in accordance with particular national circumstances.

The broad common denominator, however, as pointed out by Mr. Jim Butler, Deputy Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, at yesterday's Economic and Social

Council panel discussion on the humanitarian challenges related to global food aid, is that, under the current circumstances, global demand for food outstrips supply. That increased demand may be attributed to, inter alia, population growth and longevity; new sources of demand, such as biofuels; and changing dietary and food preferences in major consumer markets. Logically, all those factors will continue to increase demand, which leads experts to conclude that the era of low food prices may not be returning any time soon.

On the supply side, the combination of underinvestment in the agricultural sector, stagnating yield growth, the negative impact of high energy prices and the disastrous effects of the extreme weather events brought about by climate change have resulted in shortfalls.

If we add the pressures brought about by a poor global economic environment, it is clear that this complex issue can be addressed only with the full cooperation of all stakeholders — national Governments, the United Nations, international development partners and financial institutions, the private sector, civil society and, of course, producers themselves, whether they be small-scale or members of agribusiness. It is just as clear, however, that the direct responsibility for providing succour to each person in need rests with each affected Member State.

For the Philippines, that means that immediate action has to be taken at the national level to address the crisis caused by rice prices. Thus, the Philippines has embarked forthwith on a rice self-sufficiency plan for the period 2009-2010, aimed at increasing the country's rice output to 19.8 million metric tons by 2010. In order to achieve that, 30 billion pesos are being allocated to spend on research and development, agricultural infrastructure, sustainable integrated farming systems, rice biotechnology and education. Bilateral assistance has been sought, and a $216.5 million food security agreement has already been signed with the United States. The World Bank has also indicated that the Philippines is eligible to receive $1.2 billion under its global food programme.

At the international level, the Philippines, during the Rome summit, called for the creation of a global grain reserve to protect importing and exporting countries alike from sharply fluctuating prices. The Philippines also encouraged countries that plan to embark on a biofuels programme to do so using non-food sources so as not to affect food security. Furthermore, in support of increased funding for global research and development, the Philippines has strongly sought support for the International Rice Research Institute, which is based in the Philippines. I spoke extensively on that subject at the Special Meeting of the Economic and Social Council on the Global Food Crisis, held on 20 May.

Today, the General Assembly can literally make a world of difference with regard to the most pressing issue of the global food and energy crisis. By endorsing the comprehensive framework for action and implementing the proposals contained therein, the General Assembly, as the most representative legislative body in the world, would be able to provide a coherent and coordinated response to the immediate needs of the many millions adversely affected by high food and energy prices and, more important, lay the foundation for continued stable and rational markets in the food and energy sectors. That decision must be made now. The Philippines joins the rest of the Assembly in making that decision today or, at the latest, at any time during the remainder of the sixty-second session.

Let me end with a note on something that we have probably failed to consider: the role of people themselves, in their individual capacities, in the crisis. I say without fear of contradiction that the vices, bad habits and bad practices of people have contributed to the crisis. I am referring to the vices or habits of avarice, greed, selfishness, ambition, pride, envy, inordinate desires and lust, which have caused or resulted in, among other things, the insatiable desire for wealth or gain, ostentatious living, the unnecessary display or use of wealth, reprehensible acquisitiveness and utter wastefulness, and will continue to do so.

Baruch Spinoza said that avarice, ambition and lust, are nothing but a species of madness. If only people would restore the values of self-discipline, self-control, self-sacrifice and self-denial through a reduction in selfishness and an increase in solicitude, compassion and the virtue of sharing, each would become a part of the solution and would not be part of the problem. The message, then, is clear: the food and energy crisis that we face today can also be solved through a personal transformation or change of heart on the part of everyone on this planet, especially the rich and the powerful. A decent soul once said, "He

that will not permit his wealth to do any good to others while he is living prevents it from doing any good to himself when he is dead".

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation endorses the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We appreciate the measures taken by the Secretary-General to address the current food crisis and support the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis in its efforts to develop an international cooperation framework on food security. We hope that the agencies concerned will keep in contact with Member States in implementing the framework and take measures in the light of the specific needs of Member States.

Food is vital to human survival and has an impact not only on the economy and people's well-being in each country, but also on the development and security of the world as a whole. There are now more than 800 million people living under the threat of starvation. Surging food prices will swell that figure and seriously hinder the efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in some countries. Developing countries are hardest hit by the global food crisis, which has even entailed social unrest in some countries. That has a direct impact on world economic stability and development and is not conducive to lasting peace or the common prosperity of the world.

The current rise of food prices is caused by the interplay of multifaceted factors. It is worth noting that an argument has recently been advanced stressing the so-called responsibility of large developing countries for the crisis and blaming their development for the recent worldwide food price increases. That does not correspond to the facts, nor is it a constructive attitude to adopt in undertaking efforts to solve the problem. With the current expansion of economic globalization and enormous advances in science and technology, we do not lack the means to solve the food problem. The key is to embrace a spirit of common development, actively and effectively coordinate policies and actions and make concerted efforts to safeguard world food security. To that end, countries need to approach the food issue from a broader and longer-term perspective and jointly formulate a strategy for sustainable food development.

In that connection, I would like to emphasize the following three points. First, we must build consensus and resolve the food issue within the framework of sustainable development. All countries should approach the food issue from a strategic perspective and accord top priority to the issue of food security in their national development agendas. They should focus on agricultural production and policy support for agriculture development, and increase financial and technological inputs to agriculture so as to improve food output and increase food reserves. Major food-producing countries should undertake further efforts in that regard. Developing countries should continue to improve their production capacities, while developed countries should provide the necessary financial and technical support.

Secondly, we must address both the symptoms and the root causes of the problem and take an integrated approach to the food issue. The food crisis can be attributed to complicated and multifaceted factors. Countries need to view those factors as interrelated and, bearing in mind both long-term and immediate interests, take comprehensive measures in the fields of finance, trade, assistance, the environment, intellectual property rights and technology transfers in order to create favourable conditions for food security. None of those aspects should be neglected. Countries should work together to keep global food prices stable. Prudent policies should be adopted to balance the development of biofuels and the maintenance of food security.

Thirdly, we must strengthen dialogue and coordination and explore a new framework for international cooperation. We must create a favourable international trading environment and establish a fair and equitable international trade order for agricultural products. All countries, and developed countries in particular, should demonstrate goodwill in the Doha agricultural negotiations, remove trade barriers, demonstrate flexibility over such issues as the reduction of agricultural subsidies and give sufficient consideration to the special concerns of developing countries. The international community needs to develop a reasonable mechanism for financial support and technology transfer to help developing countries improve their capacity for planting, disease and pest prevention, food reserves, and food output.

China has always attached great importance to agriculture, especially the food issue. China depends

mainly on domestic food production. For nearly 10 years, China has met over 95 per cent of its food demand on its own and exported a net amount of 8 million tons annually of staple grains such as wheat, rice and corn. China's current average agricultural tariff is only a quarter of the world's average. China takes an active part in international food and agricultural cooperative efforts and strives to make a contribution to global food and agricultural development. Since 2003, China has provided nearly 300,000 tons of food assistance, built 14 integrated agricultural projects and established more than 20 agricultural technology demonstration centres beyond its borders. We have trained over 4,000 agriculture-related managerial and technical staff for other developing countries. We are ready to share further experience on agricultural development with other developing countries within the framework of South-South cooperation and to provide various kinds of assistance to the extent possible.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this timely debate.

The steep rise in global food prices is a multifaceted structural crisis that requires a fully coordinated response and a comprehensive strategy from the international community. Japan highly appreciates the strong leadership role the Secretary-General has personally provided, together with the President of the Bretton Woods institutions, by quickly rallying the United Nations system through the establishment of the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis.

Japan is pleased that the Task Force has finalized the comprehensive framework for action, which constitutes an important foundation for coherent action on the part of the entire international community. Japan hopes that the framework will be swiftly translated into implementation plans for countries in need to ensure the immediate delivery of assistance.

Japan, as the host country for both the fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV) and the G8 summit this year, has made every effort to increase synergy in the actions taken by TICAD IV, the G8 and the United Nations system, including the Task Force.

The TICAD Yokohama Action Plan stipulated the commitment to strengthening agricultural capacity in Africa by doubling rice production, increasing investments in infrastructure and financing small-scale community-managed irrigation and water management schemes. Agricultural and rural reform in the framework of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme of the New Partnership for Africa's Development was recognized as an important means of achieving food security and poverty alleviation and as having the potential to be a major force for driving economic growth in Africa.

Global food security was also among the most important items on the agenda of the G8 Hokkaido Toyako summit, which resulted in the issuing of a special statement this past week. Above all, G8 leaders commended the leadership of the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions for convening the High-Level Task Force and urged the relevant stakeholders to swiftly implement the comprehensive framework for action and to achieve prompt delivery for countries in need.

The G8 leaders renewed their commitment to taking all possible measures to address the food crisis, from short-term food aid to medium- and long-term responses. The members of the G8 have committed over $10 billion to that purpose since January this year.

The G8 also agreed to take a number of actions aimed at assisting those who are suffering from food insecurity or even hunger. It is imperative to remove export restrictions and to expedite the current negotiation at the World Trade Organization aimed at introducing stricter disciplines on those trade actions, which prolong and aggravate the situation and hinder humanitarian purchases of food commodities.

As for medium- and long-term measures, the G8 stressed the importance of reversing the downward trend in support for developing countries' initiatives in agriculture. The leaders also agreed to support improvement of infrastructure such as irrigation, transportation and storage systems. They agreed to ensure the compatibility of policies for the sustainable production and use of biofuels with food security, and to accelerate development and commercialization of sustainable second-generation biofuels. The leaders established a G8 experts group to monitor implementation of those commitments and to contribute to forming a global partnership.

Japan's approach to the food crisis is based on its strong commitment to promoting human security globally and is aimed at protecting every individual's

sense of security and at meeting basic human needs. Considering the serious impact that the sharp increase in food prices has had, particularly on people in developing countries, Japan recently approved an additional food aid package of approximately $50 million to be disbursed by October, on top of the $200 million in food aid that has already been disbursed this year.

As for medium- and long-term measures, Japan has committed to assisting in increasing agricultural productivity, including aiming to double rice production through the development and rehabilitation of irrigation facilities and new crop varieties in Africa, and capacity-building for 50,000 agricultural leaders in African countries. Moreover, at the Rome conference, Prime Minister Fukuda of Japan pledged an additional $50 million to help impoverished farmers to boost food production and announced that the Government was prepared to release over 300,000 tons of imported rice. In total, Japan has so far committed approximately $1.1 billion of food and agricultural assistance to developing countries this year.

Agriculture and food production have not been given as high a priority as they deserve in the national policies of many countries. We should take advantage of the great political attention the United Nations has succeeded in harnessing and turn the crisis into an opportunity for the international community to take strong global action and make greater investments in agriculture and food production.

The will of the international community to tackle the food crisis is well confirmed now. What we need are more concrete actions and follow-up on the pledges made. Action must be well supervised and coherent, under the coordination of the United Nations.

One can hardly overemphasize the importance of a well-coordinated and structured response on the part of the different organizations within the United Nations system as well as on the part of international financial institutions. We expect the United Nations, under the strong leadership of the Secretary-General, to continue to play a central coordinating role in providing an effective response to that global challenge.

Japan is ready to be in the vanguard in striving to ensure food security for all, which is a foundation of life and an essential element of human security.

Mrs. Dinić (Croatia): Mr. President, let me thank you on behalf of the Croatian delegation for organizing this meeting on the issue of food security. We believe that the General Assembly is the appropriate forum to address this very important issue following the Food and Agriculture Organization global food safety summit in Rome in early June 2008 and the Special Meeting of the Economic and Social Council held in May.

I am sure that we are all aware of the seriousness of the crisis that the world is facing and the imperative to act immediately. Croatia appreciates the initiative of the Secretary-General in setting up the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis and also welcomes its report on the comprehensive framework for action. Indeed, the United Nations system, together with the Bretton Woods institutions, has an important role to play in that regard. Close partnership with the private sector, civil society and non-governmental organizations is needed as well.

Increasing investment in agriculture, including support for agricultural research, is the basis for dealing with the food security issue in the long term. The current world food crisis provides an opportunity to work towards boosting agricultural production in developing countries, in particular in Africa, where smallhold farmers urgently need development assistance. Nevertheless, it is necessary to take some urgent measures to provide access to food for the poor, particularly for the most vulnerable.

We commend those countries that have responded swiftly to meet the funding gaps for emergency food assistance operations. We particularly appreciate the fact that food security and the fight against poverty were high on the Group of Eight summit agenda. Our common challenge is to increase food production and to manage the impact of rising food prices on macroeconomic policy.

The world will face another security crisis if it fails to react adequately and to provide affordable food for those in need. The hunger that some parts of the world are facing is absolutely unnecessary; it is degrading and deeply unjust. It is a fact that more than 9 million children in the world still die every year before the age of five, mostly from malnutrition and preventable diseases. That situation continues despite all the efforts of the United Nations system and the entire international community, in particular UNICEF,

to alleviate the suffering of and to assist vulnerable groups, especially mothers and children.

Notwithstanding those efforts, we believe that it is inadmissible that a solution to the problem remains elusive. One needs to bear in mind that, in the current food crisis, there is a great risk of a further 100 million people being pushed back below the $1-a-day poverty line unless we act now. Moreover, the crisis also threatens to undermine progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, setting many countries back from the gains of the past few years.

The collective and concerted efforts of the international community, individually and globally, are still of the utmost importance. As the President of the Republic of Croatia rightly pointed out at the Rome summit last month, "We must admit responsibility and we must accept it".

Croatia accepts that there are several complex structural causes, some of them interconnected, of the global escalation in food prices, such as rising energy costs, climate change and turbulence in financial markets. Increased usage of renewable energy sources and alternative fuels could be a part of the solution to the energy crisis and can help to promote efforts to mitigate the impact of climate change. The most important challenge is to maintain a balance of different sources of energy production in support of sustainable development.

It is also true that today's crisis did not come about overnight. It is partly a consequence of inadequate sustainable development and the lack of universal access to international trade and international financial institutions. In that regard, Croatia would support an early conclusion of the World Trade Organization Doha Round that would provide significant new market opportunities for developing countries.

For its part, Croatia is ready to work actively with other Member States and to engage constructively in the implementation of a comprehensive strategy and action plan to address the current food security crisis.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): Mr. President, thank you for convening this meeting, which constitutes another timely occasion to address the acute situation brought about by the surge in food and energy prices worldwide.

I would also like to commend the Secretary-General for recognizing the need for prompt and coordinated global action.

The High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General John Holmes, has responded to the Secretary-General's initiative with the comprehensive framework for action. The document is a very thorough undertaking, as it seeks to analyse the current food crisis and to propose action for tackling the food and energy security challenges.

Even as hunger has decreased by 50 per cent worldwide since 1969, the number of malnourished people is now tending to increase as a consequence of the escalation in food prices. The deep-seated distortions plaguing the world farm trade are among the factors driving the current trend. Poor farmers in developing countries, unable to compete in world and local markets with the subsidized exports of many developed countries, have also been hit by the high prices of farming inputs. As a consequence, they have not been able to invest in expanding food production.

Droughts have also affected production in various regions of the world. Likewise, bad weather, coupled with low-skilled farming, has thwarted efforts to improve yields, especially in Africa. Human vulnerability is at the centre of the current dilemma. How do we increase food production sustainably, while meeting the growing need for clean sustainable energy so as to mitigate the effects of global warming? How do we guarantee fair access to land tenure so as to empower farmers, especially in developing countries, to raise food production and participate in the global commodity trade under fair competition?

Meeting those challenges will require determined commitment by the international community through concerted action. Negotiations and action need to communicate seamlessly, and early warning mechanisms need to be perfected to prevent hunger from threatening to unravel progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially concerning the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger.

In that respect, strengthened family agriculture can contribute significantly in developing countries. In my country, for instance, more than 50 per cent of the food needs of the population are met by small-scale farmers. Through credit, technical assistance and

improved distribution channels and storage, farmers can rapidly attain higher yields and provide the required food stocks to eliminate hunger and malnutrition.

Brazil is convinced that food production and renewable sources of clean energy, such as sustainable biofuels, can be harmonized. Our own experience over the past 30 years is an example of that. President Lula has consistently pleaded for the debate on biofuels to be based on facts and to take into account not only their different sources, but also the different national circumstances. Biofuels from sources other than cereals are compatible with food security, provide an important source of income to farmers and constitute a valuable tool to combat climate change.

Food security should be seen from both the supply and the demand sides. The successful experiences of some developing countries can prove useful to others in the developing world and can serve as a platform for international cooperation.

Better and sustainable land management, increased investments in agriculture, scaled-up official development assistance for agricultural development, including improved seeds, equipment, capacity-building and transfer of technology, as well as market access, through a balanced completion of the World Trade Organization Doha Round, will be important elements in overcoming the crisis.

The Task Force advocates reaching an international consensus on biofuels. It calls for an appraisal of biofuel policies and underscores the need to establish agreed policy guidelines on biofuel production that take full account of climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, food security, income and energy needs at local levels in all countries. It correctly views biofuels as an opportunity for countries that have a comparative advantage in feedstock production and recognizes that biofuel development can be compatible with food production.

It is our hope that the international conference on biofuels to be held in Brazil in November will stimulate a frank and well-informed debate that will facilitate an evolving consensus on the matter. The debate will focus on issues such as the sustainable use of natural resources, particularly land and water, the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and the generation of benefits for local communities. It will also provide a forum for consultations among stakeholders on investments in biofuels.

We believe that the Task Force should propose a menu of options to counter the pervasive impact of escalating oil prices on food security and human vulnerability. As emphasized by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Honduras earlier this morning, the recent joint declaration issued at the summit of heads of State of the Central American Integration System and Brazil called for the General Assembly to examine the impact of the recent surge in oil prices and of possible speculative moves on food costs and the consequences for developing countries, in particular. The debate on the issue is greatly needed in order to consider what possible actions, commensurate with the magnitude of the problem in the short-, medium- and long-term, could be envisaged.

In closing, I would like to reiterate Brazil's willingness to participate in an objective and well-informed dialogue with all Member States that could be conducive to finding solutions to the current food and energy crisis. Our commitment is guided by the principles of sustainable development. We hope that implementation of the comprehensive framework for action will be the objective of concerted action by Member States, the United Nations and the international financial institutions with a view to overcoming the current situation of food and energy insecurity.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.